

Introductory Remarks on S. 888, The Museum and Library Services Act of 2003

Mr. President, today I rise to introduce legislation reauthorizing the Museum and Library Services Act. I am joined in this effort by Senator Reed, Senator Frist, Senator Kennedy, Senator Enzi, and several other colleagues of mine. Mr. President, libraries and museums serve as important cultural institutions in communities throughout our nation, and this legislation will provide them with continued federal support through innovative grant programs administered by the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Specifically, this bill authorizes \$250 million for libraries and \$41.5 million for museums in 2004, and such sums as necessary in 2005 through 2009. In addition, it authorizes a doubling of the minimum state allotment under the Grants to State Library Agencies Program, up to \$680,000. That provision, coupled with the expected increase in appropriations for 2004, will greatly benefit New Hampshire's libraries.

The bill contains a number of other important provisions. Recognizing the importance of school libraries, it requires that the Institute's library activities be coordinated with the school library provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act. My bill also prohibits projects determined to be obscene from receiving federal funds, requires the Institute to conduct analyses of the need for museum and library services and the effectiveness of funded projects in meeting those needs, consolidates the library and museum advisory boards into one entity, and prohibits funds appropriated under the Act's authority from being used for library or museum construction.

Furthermore, this bill increases the indemnity limits in the Arts and Artifacts Indemnity Act, thereby facilitating the international exchange and display of works of art, books, rare documents and other published materials, artifacts, and films and other audiovisual media. This will ensure that people throughout the world are exposed to American culture and that our own citizens will have richer educational opportunities available as well.

I want to thank Senator Reed for his leadership on this issue, as well as Senator Frist, Senator Kennedy, and Senator Enzi, particularly. Together we have crafted a bipartisan bill that will serve our museums and libraries well in the coming years. I expect to move this bill through the HELP Committee soon, and look forward to its speedy passage.